

“He saw there a man who had no wedding garment.”

Mt 22:11

Tomorrow, 12th October, is the anniversary of the dedication of our church in 1961. A church may not be consecrated if there are any outstanding debts to pay on the building, so perhaps that explains the delay. In any case, sixty-five years ago tomorrow the bishop of Northampton travelled down to Ipswich and performed the elaborate and beautiful ceremony of consecration.¹ Whereas this place had been hallowed by a hundred years of prayers and devotions – the holy sacrifice of the Mass had been offered every day, Confessions had been heard, baptisms and weddings performed, funerals undertaken, and devotions made – nonetheless from the moment the building was consecrated something changed. The solemn rites ceremonially consecrate the church building as a sacred space and separate it from the profane world outside. In here, all secular or worldly activities are forbidden. The church formally becomes a house of God expressly and exclusively consecrated to the work and worship of God. At the same time, the consecration of the building makes it the embodiment of the Mystical Body of Christ. In other words, the building symbolizes – and yet, somehow, more than merely represents – the Church Herself that Christ founded for the work of sanctification and salvation. Just as the walls are made of bricks so we are the living stones and members of the Church here on earth: the presence of God in the midst of a secular world. And being a sacred space, the church also becomes the place where God’s graces flow down from heaven and into this world below, and into our hearts and our homes. Through the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and through the Sacraments conferred upon us, and through the sacramentals blessed in God’s name, a great waterfall of grace is poured into

our lives so that we might become holy and be made more like to Christ through our personal sacrifices and penances, and through a life of virtue laid at the service of God and of neighbour.

Well might we say with Jacob in the Book of Genesis, ‘Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not’ (28:16).

How do we, the people who come to pray in this place, make a proper return to God for the many graces and blessings that He pours into our lives?

In the first instance our responsibility is to honour the third of the Ten Commandments: ‘Remember that thou shalt keep holy the sabbath day’ (Ex 20:8). Our minimum response to God – the bottom line for Catholics – is to keep Sunday as a holy day. Although the distinctness of Sundays is being eroded in our society by shifting work and social patterns, nevertheless Sundays have been given to us in a Christian society as a holy day consecrated to God.

Please note that Sunday is not a family day but God’s day. Our priority is to make Sunday a holy day, separate and distinct from the other days of the week. It is a good thing that a holy day involves family and friends, but Sunday is still God’s day before it is a family day.

So how do we make Sunday a holy day?

First, we are obliged as Catholics to go to Mass on Sundays. Saturday evening Masses fulfil the obligation, but were only designed to cater for those whose work commitments stopped them from getting to Mass on a Sunday. Saturday evening masses were never intended to replace going to Mass on a Sunday. Even if we have visitors – or are staying elsewhere with friends – we are still obliged to go to Mass. And we should always try to make our travel arrangements so that they do not stop us from getting to Mass either.

¹ You can watch a ceremony of the consecration of a church at [Immaculata Church Consecration](#).

Second, we are obliged by the third Commandment to abstain from servile work. This means we should not undertake any work by which we earn our living or for which we might get paid. Nor should we undertake any household chores that can reasonably be done on other days. We are, of course, allowed to prepare a meal and enjoy it in the company of family and friends, and we are allowed to enjoy relaxing and creative past times including sports, but never *instead* of going to Mass!

Third, we should try to incorporate at least some additional prayers over and above what we would normally say on other days of the week. This might include the rosary if we do not already say the rosary, or some other devotions. The whole day does not have to be taken up with a long list of prayers or Bible readings as if we were nineteenth century Puritans, but Sundays should include at least some extra prayer on top of Sunday Mass and our usual daily offerings. We might, for example, go to any devotions that are laid on in our parish church in the afternoon.

And finally, we might dress differently on a Sunday, at least when we go to Mass. We dress up if we go to a wedding or other posh social event. Should we not pay the Lord the same level of respect and dress up when we go to worship Him on His feast day?

Sunday is a holy day: it is God's day. We do well to find ways to make it a day that is fit for the Lord, whilst remembering the fate of the man in the Gospel who turned up to the wedding without a wedding garment.